

In September 1992, the North Carolina Department of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources was successful in winning a grant award from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to increase state and local capacity to evaluate progress toward Healthy People 2000 objectives and to use this information for policy making and program management. Delton Atkinson, director of the State Center for Health and Environmental Statistics, oversees this 5-year grant. The activities in this project are directly related to objectives in *Healthy People 2000*. Objective 22.5 emphasizes the need for measurement of progress: "Implement in all states periodic analysis and publication of data needed to measure progress toward objectives for at least 10 of the priority areas of the national health objectives." Objective 22.5a emphasizes "periodic analysis and publication of state progress toward the national objectives for each racial or ethnic group that makes up at least 10 percent of the state population." Objective 22.6 is geared toward systems for the transfer of health information related to the national health objectives among federal, state, and local agencies.

Meanwhile, one-year funding from the Public Health Foundation has enabled the State Center to begin minority studies^{4,7} and to establish a minority health surveillance system. Against that background, the CDC grant now allows for ongoing evaluation of the state's progress toward the Year 2000 national health objectives, in total and for minorities, and establishment of a related electronic health information system covering the entire population as well as the Black and American Indian groups.

As a first step in achieving the goals of the Year 2000 grant from CDC, the present report purports to assess North Carolina's status with respect to selected national health objectives, specifically, a) those included in a consensus set of indicators selected by CDC and the nation's six major public health organizations,⁸ and b) objectives specific for Blacks and American Indians for which data are available. Objectives for Hispanics and for Asians and Pacific Islanders are not examined due to data problems known to exist for Hispanics⁷ and the

small size of the Asian/Pacific Islander population—52,166 or 0.8 percent of the state's population in 1990. By comparison, Blacks numbered 1.46 million (22%) in 1990 while the much smaller American Indian population numbered 79,825 (1.2%); these two minority groups are the focus of studies funded in part by the Public Health Foundation.^{4,6}

CONSENSUS SET OF HEALTH INDICATORS

Objective 22.1 of *Healthy People 2000* requires the development of a set of health status indicators appropriate for federal, state, and local health agencies. A committee, assembled by CDC and representing the nation's six major public health organizations, has developed a consensus set of 20 such indicators, priority being given to those measures for which data are readily available and the measures are commonly used in public health.⁸

For 15 of the 20 consensus indicators, Table 1 provides the Year 2000 objective and the North Carolina statistic for each year 1990-1992. As described in table note 1, U.S. objectives have not been established for three indicators, and North Carolina data are not available for two others. The reader should also note the indicators typed in italics; these or similar indicators are among the *Healthy Carolinians 2000* set developed by a state task force³ and currently being addressed through community-based health improvement programs across the state.

As shown in Table 1, the North Carolina lung cancer death rate for each year 1990-1992 was near or below the Year 2000 objective. Unfortunately, this is the only one of the 15 consensus indicators on which the state ranks relatively well.

By and large, North Carolina indicators for the early 1990s are far from the Year 2000 objectives for the U.S. That raises the point: are the U.S. single-point objectives entirely appropriate for states whose baselines are so poor relative to those for the nation? Probably not, but the fact remains that each state should realize progress toward a specific objective. For the following